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[For the Common School Journal.]

LEXINGTON NORMAL SCHOOL.

HON. HORACE MANN:

Dear Sir,—I had the gratification of being present at a recent examination of the Normal School, in Lexington, under the care of Cyrus Pierce, Esq., and it is with pleasure I comply with a request from one of the friends of the institution, by preparing a brief notice of that event. The examination was on the 21st of December, and continued through the day. The number of pupils present was 35; consisting of young ladies from different parts of the State, some of whom have previously been employed in the instruction of Public Schools,—a few, several years. As the time was not sufficient for a survey of all the studies pursued at the institution, the examination, for the most part, was judiciously directed to branches more especially relating to the art of instruction.

In the morning, the young ladies were questioned respecting the best modes of teaching the various common branches of learning; and, in their intelligent and satisfactory remarks, on this important topic, manifested that they had been accustomed, not merely to learn lessons from the book or the lecture, but to inquire and judge for themselves on the subjects presented to their attention. Their views respecting the course which should be pursued in the organization and management of a Public School were then brought out; in the course of which, the best method of introducing improvements in teaching where prejudices exist against them, was considered, and an interesting conversation took place on the motives which should be employed by instructors of the young in correcting the faults, and promoting the good behavior and diligent application, of their pupils.

In the afternoon, the last-mentioned subject was resumed. The propriety and expediency of using corporal punishment in schools were well discussed, and the greater efficacy and better influences of an appeal to the moral sentiments in the government of children were satisfactorily shown. A few of the young ladies thought that the rod might be necessary in some cases. A large majority were of opinion that it should not be resorted to, in any case. All were agreed that, instead of exciting a spirit of emulation, the teacher should endeavor to inspire her pupils with a desire of improvement, and that, while disapprobation of misconduct should always be expressed in some suitable manner, it will be much more efficacious in bringing the offender to penitence and reformation, if it is accompanied with manifestations of compassion and kindness. To this succeeded an examination in

physiology, and the importance of an acquaintance with this science to those who have the care of the young was made very manifest. Questions were then asked respecting the constitution of man in its various relations to external objects, calling forth remarks which discovered a clear perception of some of the principal laws connected with this important subject. Then followed exercises in reading by several of the more advanced pupils, in which a distinct, beautiful, and impressive utterance was given to favorite passages in prose and poetry. A few of the many compositions prepared for the occasion were then read, and also extracts from a periodical sustained by the young ladies, and circulated among themselves,—instructive and beautiful productions of intelligent, cultivated, well-informed minds.

An address to the pupils appropriate to the occasion, and replete with great truths and a holy spirit, was then given by Rev. Mr. Stetson, of Medford, followed by a few brief and gratifying remarks from Rev. Mr. Parker, of Cambridgeport; after which the exercises were concluded with a simple and affecting hymn, written by one of the young ladies, and sung by the members of the school. High approbation was expressed by the reverend gentlemen who spoke on this occasion, and I think the numerous visitors who thronged the hall must have felt that high approbation was due to the instructor and instructed. The impressions made on my mind were of no ordinary interest and gratification. The simplicity, the devotedness, the deep wisdom, the practical skill, the paternal solicitude and kindness, manifested by the long-experienced and eminently-successful teacher; the intelligent countenances, considerate answers, and well-founded opinions, of the highly-favored pupils; the important ideas advanced on the subjects under consideration; the evident establishment of mind in strict principles of truth and right; the high tone of moral sentiment, and kindly glow of benevolent feeling, discernible in so many young minds preparing to impart the light of their knowledge and the spirit of their goodness to multitudes of the rising generation,—were to me very pleasing subjects of contemplation at the time, and are very pleasant in their remembrance, and confirm me in the conviction that the Normal School has already done something considerable to increase the qualifications of instructors, and thus to promote the improvement of Common Schools; and that, if this and similar institutions shall continue and prosper, their good effects will be more and more manifest in the better health, the improved dispositions, the superior intelligence, the more real information, the higher morality, and the greater goodness, of the children of our land.

In looking over what I have written on this subject, I perceive that I have used *many* expressions of praise. But, on consideration, I cannot find one of them which could be erased without taking something from the truth.

Yours, &c.

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TRY. "Let a man sit down at the foot of a great mountain," says Dr. Johnson, "to contemplate its greatness, and he will be ready to say, 'I can never go over it; the attempt is futile.' Yet, on the second thought, he concludes the task can be performed, not by one mighty leap, but by successive steps, and by the simple process of putting one foot before the other."

[For the Common School Journal.]

## MIDDLESEX COMMON SCHOOL CONVENTION.

CAMBRIDGE, JANUARY 12, 1842.

REV. C. STETSON, Medford, in the Chair.

The friends of education, in Middlesex county, have an organized association, for the purpose of holding quarterly meetings, to hear lectures, or engage in the discussion of questions, relating to the Common Schools. These meetings are holden, from time to time, in different parts of the county, so that the people may have an opportunity to attend and take part in the performances.

This mode of awakening parents and teachers to the duties which they owe to the rising generation, is a good one, and we should be glad to see the example followed throughout the Commonwealth. We regretted, however, that there was not a more general attendance in Cambridge, inasmuch as its position, in reference to education, should have enlisted pride, as well as principle, to insure not only a full meeting, but an interesting one. Those, however, who did attend, appeared fully impressed with the importance of the great subject which called them together, and manifested a lively spirit in all the proceedings of the meeting. We may infer as much as this from the character of the questions which were announced for discussion.

Only two questions were discussed. The audience were addressed by Cyrus Pierce, Esq., Principal of the Normal School at Lexington, in his usual happy and impressive manner. He spoke of the *moral duties* incumbent upon *parents, teachers, and school committees*, and adverted to the fact, that committees engaged teachers, with almost an entire reference to their intellectual attainments, and without even asking a question as to their views of moral duty, or habits of life. In this respect, the statute of the Commonwealth was disregarded, and moral instruction neglected. He spoke of the evils which would follow the introduction of sectarian views into our schools, but he saw no reason why the fundamental truths of Christianity, which were admitted by all sects, should not be taught with the greatest care. Such a course was required by a proper sense of duty, and by our laws. He insisted that such a course would not only be right, by law, but highly conducive of good to the rising generation.

The convention then took up the question, "What is the best method of teaching grammar, and at what age should it be taught?"

Although the question was called up by Mr. Pierce, he did not give his views of the subject, except to confirm, what is universally admitted, that it is a difficult matter to decide upon the *best mode* of teaching grammar, or to fix any particular age at which it would be safe to commence the study, considering the diversity of talent in children for aptness, or quickness of apprehension.

We regret that he did not state more fully his own views upon the subject, as they doubtless would have been valuable, being, as he really is, one of the best teachers in our country.

Mr. Goldsbury thought that instruction in language should commence in the *nursery*; that grammar might be taught by the parents and by the children among themselves, i. e., so far as the proper use of words might be concerned. As to the whole subject,—embracing

the philosophy of language,—it was too intellectual for young children. He thought that much might be taught at the age of ten, if the right method were pursued. One thing should be taught at a time, and that thoroughly,—and then another; and when the parts of speech are all understood, separately, they may be brought together, and their relations taught.

Mr. Simmons spoke of his own experience, when young. He was rewarded for going through the grammar in a very short time, but did not seem to think that it resulted in much profit. He thought nineteen twentieths of the grammar book were too philosophical to be taught successfully to children before the age of fourteen. Talking should be taught, and errors corrected, but no *rules* given. He could not call to mind the task as imposed upon him, when at school, with any pleasure. It was rather with the feeling of horror that he reverted to the hours which were spent upon this interesting, though abused branch of knowledge.

The President sympathized with Mr. Simmons, and concurred with his sentiments.

Mr. Keith dissented. He had been a teacher and learner, and did not look back upon his tasks in grammar with any feeling of horror. He studied the subject when young, and did not remember that he found any difficulty in understanding his lessons. He thought that much might be taught in conversation, by correcting every violation of grammar; he had taught a class of children from the ages of seven to eight, and would undertake to succeed as well with such a class, as with a majority of men. He mentioned the ages of eight and fourteen, and thought that much might be taught during that period;—and so of the subject of natural philosophy, and arithmetic. He did not consider books, at so early an age, as important, but thought that much might be accomplished without them. He would adapt all studies to the capacity of the child, and so present them as to render them acceptable to the young mind. The philosophy of language, or grammar, as an entire subject, he thought, was the most difficult, and therefore the last to give the learner.

Mr. Sweetser, of Charlestown, thought that grammar should be taught as early as possible.

Thus the subject was discussed, and dismissed, and without any *definite* result. The audience were doubtless enlightened, but they did not arrive at that practical conclusion, which, in all such cases, is most desirable.

In conclusion, we would quote an author upon this subject; and, though a mere opinion, it may add one item more to the stock of facilities, for the use of teachers.

“If it be asked, when grammar and rhetoric should be taught,—we answer, when the scholar is old enough to *know* and require the facility and use of them, and not before. I would have parents and instructors always bear in mind, when they are about to give new lessons to their children, the sentiment of Dr. Johnson, who says,—‘To oblige children to commit to memory what they do not understand, *perverts their faculties, and gives them a dislike to learning.*’”

The convention then proceeded to discuss the question, “Whether emulation ought to be encouraged in our Common Schools?”



The subject was ably discussed by Messrs. Pierce, Dawes, Keith, McIntosh, Sweetser, and the President. Although there was discussion upon the subject, there seemed to be but little difference of opinion. Mr. Pierce said, to emulate,—to imitate the virtues of others,—was the scriptural sense of the word, and the *good sense*; and as such, to be approved. But he condemned that emulation which leads to rivalry, and begets the spirit of envy, or of an unholy ambition. Mr. Dawes thought that there was in the human mind an *inherent love* of all that is excellent, or perfect, or beautiful in execution; and when a boy was capable of excelling all others, it did not inspire envy, but respect. He made a distinction between that emulation which is entirely selfish, and that which excites the mind to laudable effort and successful attainment.

The President remarked upon the emulation which prevails in society, and very happily illustrated the principle in its most objectionable sense; and then, in a very forcible manner, urged that emulation which leads to all that is good, and great, and holy,—for the reward which is to be enjoyed by the actual practice of the virtues.

The views which prevailed at this meeting were so entirely in accordance with those expressed by a learned correspondent of your Journal, "G. B. E.," [in the 1st and 2d vols.] that I cannot do so well as to refer the reader to that series of articles.

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[The following is the beautiful close of a most able and admirable article in the EDINBURGH REVIEW, on "The History of Port Royal, The Struggle of the Reformed, and The Jesuitical Catholicism."]

"If these slight notices of the heroes and heroines of Port Royal should be ascribed by any one to a pen plighted to do suit and service to the cause of Rome, no surmise could be wider of the mark. No Protestant can read the writings of the Port Royalists themselves, without gratitude for his deliverance from the superstitions of a church which calls herself catholic, and boasts that she is eternal. That the church of Rome may flourish as long as the race of man shall endure, is indeed a conclusion which may reasonably be adopted by him who divines the future only from the past. For where is the land, or what the historical period, in which a conspicuous place has not been held by phenomena essentially the same, however circumstantially different? In what age has man not been a worshipper of the visible? In what country has imagination,—the sensuous property of the mind,—failed to triumph over those mental powers which are purely contemplative? Who can discover a period in which Religion has not more or less assumed the form of a compromise between the self-dependence and the self-distrust of her votaries,—between their abasement to human authority, and their conviction of its worthlessness,—between their awe of the divine power, and their habitual revolt against the divine will? Of every such compromise, the indications have ever been the same,—a worshipper of pomp and ceremonial, a spiritual despotism exercised by a sacerdotal caste, bodily penances and costly expiations, and the constant intervention of man, and of the works of man, between the worshipper and the supreme object of his worship. \* \* \*

"But for every labor under the sun, says the wise man, there is a time. There is a time for bearing testimony against the errors of Rome,—why not also a time for testifying to the sublime virtues with which those errors have been so often associated? Are we forever to admit, and never to practise, the duties of kindness and mutual forbearance? Does Christianity consist in a vivid perception of the faults, and an obtuse blindness to the merits, of those who differ from us? Is charity a virtue, only when we ourselves are the objects of it? Is there not a church as pure and more catholic than those of Oxford or Rome,—a church comprehending within its limits every human being, who, according to the measure of knowledge placed within his reach, strives habitually to be conformed to the will of the common Father of us all? To indulge hope beyond the pale of some narrow communion, has, by each Christian society in its turn, been denounced as a daring presumption. Yet Hope has come to all, and with her, Faith and Charity,—her inseparable companions. Amidst the shock of contending creeds, and the uproar of anathemas, they who have ears to hear, and hearts to understand, have listened to gentler and more kindly sounds. Good men may debate as polemics, but they will feel as Christians. On the universal mind of Christendom is indelibly engraven one image, towards which the eyes of all are more or less earnestly directed. Whoever has himself caught any resemblance, however faint and imperfect, to that divine and benignant Original, has, in his measure, learned to recognize a brother wherever he can discern the same resemblance.

"There is an essential unity in that kingdom which is not of this world. But within the provinces of that mighty state, there is room for endless varieties of administration, and for local laws and customs widely differing from each other. The unity consists in the one object of worship,—the one object of alliance,—the one source of virtue,—the one cementing principle of mutual love,—which pervade and animate the whole. The diversities are, and must be, as numerous and intractable as are the essential distinctions which nature, habit, and circumstances, have created amongst men. Uniformity of creeds, of discipline, of ritual, and of ceremonies, in such a world as ours!—a world where no two men are not as distinguishable in their mental as in their physical aspect; where every petty community has its separate system of civil government; where all that meets the eye, and all that arrests the ear, has the stamp of boundless and infinite variety! What are the harmonies of tone, of color, and of form, but the result of contrasts,—of contrasts held in subordination to one pervading principle, which reconciles without confounding the component elements of the music, the painting, or the structure? In the physical works of God, beauty could have no existence without endless diversities. Why assume that in religious society,—a work not less, surely, to be ascribed to the Supreme Author of all things,—this law is absolutely reversed? Were it possible to subdue that innate tendency of the human mind, which compels men to differ in religious opinions and observances, at least as widely as on all other subjects, what would be the results of such triumph? Where would then be the free comparison and the continual enlargement of thought? where the self-distrusts which are the springs of humility, or the mutual dependences which are the

bonds of love? He who made us with this infinite variety in our intellectual and physical constitution, must have foreseen, and, foreseeing, must have intended, a corresponding dissimilarity in the opinions of his creatures on all questions submitted to their judgment, and proposed for their acceptance. For truth is his law, and if all will profess to think alike, all must live in the habitual violation of it.

“Zeal for uniformity attests the latent distrusts, not the pure convictions, of the zealot. In proportion to the strength of our self-reliance is our indifference to the multiplication of suffrages in favor of our own judgment. Our minds are steeped in imagery; and where the visible form is not, the impalpable spirit escapes the notice of the unreflecting multitude. In common hands, analysis stops at the species or the genus, and cannot rise to the order or the class. To distinguish birds from fishes, beasts from insects, limits the efforts of the vulgar observer of the face of nature. But Cuvier could trace the sublime unity, the universal type, the fountal Idea, existing in the creative intelligence which connects, as one, the mammoth and the snail; so, common observers can distinguish from each other the different varieties of religious society, and can rise no higher. Where one assembly worships with harmonies of music, fumes of incense, ancient liturgies, and a gorgeous ceremonial, and another listens to the unaided voice of a single pastor, they can perceive and record the differences; but the hidden ties which unite them both escape such observation. All appears as contrast, and all ministers to antipathy and discord. It is our belief that these things may be rightly viewed in a different aspect, and yet with the most severe conformity to the divine will, whether as intimated by natural religion or as revealed in holy Scripture. We believe that, in the judgment of an enlightened charity, many Christian societies, who are accustomed to denounce each other's errors, will at length come to be regarded as members in common of the one great and comprehensive church, in which diversities of forms are harmonized by an all-pervading unity of spirit. For ourselves, at least, we should deeply regret to conclude that we were aliens from that great Christian commonwealth, of which the nuns and recluses of the valley of Port Royal were members, and members, assuredly, of no common excellence.”

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#### SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

Governor Porter, of Pennsylvania, and Governor Shannon, of Ohio, both recommend, in the strongest terms, the appointment of a Superintendent of Common Schools, for their respective States, whose duty it shall be to devote his whole time to that subject.

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ADVANCE AMONG THE CHEROKEES.—The principal chief of the Cherokees has sent in his annual message, which is a highly-interesting document, and will compare with any of the governors' messages. The chief says, there are due from the United States to that nation more than 2,500,000 dollars; and he recommends that this sum be obtained, and in part distributed among the people; but that the interest of the School Fund be devoted to the maintenance of schools and the diffusion of the blessings of education.

Is the last assertion, in the following statement, true?

ARITHMETICAL EXPRESSION.—How easy it is to speak of millions, and billions, yet how difficult to conceive what even a million is! But still we should endeavor to obtain some idea of that mighty number. Suppose we speak of the national debt; the words expressing the round sum of eight hundred millions sterling are readily spoken, but who can form a conception of that amount? We know, however, what a dollar is, and we may, for convenience, consider its value equal to a crown piece, or five shillings. We know, too, what minutes, hours, and years, are. Then we may form some idea of the amount, though a remote one, when we discover, by calculation, that the debt is considerably more than a dollar per minute, from the time our first parents were in Paradise to the present day!—more than fifteen pounds sterling per hour, through all the ages of man's existence! A billion, however, is a far more comprehensive term; so much so, indeed, as to be beyond all conception. Taking the Mosaic date, as nearly as can be computed, the world has not yet existed even one fifth part of one billion of seconds.—*The Smith and Dolier Copy-Books.*

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“Better, at any time, dismiss a teacher than counteract his discipline.”—*Prof. Stowe.*

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#### A LECTURE ON THE BEST MODE OF PREPARING AND USING SPELLING-BOOKS.

Delivered before the American Institute of Instruction, August, 1841.

BY HORACE MANN, SECRETARY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION.

(Concluded from page 32.)

This consideration also shows us the uselessness and untowardness of that arrangement of words, which not only brings all the monosyllables together, at the beginning of the spelling-book, to be followed by dissyllables, trisyllables, and polysyllables, in a numerical order, but also arranges these respective classes of words alphabetically; the words whose initial letter is *a*, coming first in the column, then those whose initial letter is *b*, and so on; so that, on turning to the heads, or first words, in the successive tables, you find the monosyllable *ache*, then the dissyllable *anguish*, then *agony*, *atrocious*, and *abomination*; and, for the poor child, it is all *ache*, *anguish*, *agony*, *atrocious*, and *abomination*; and, when the teacher understands the principles of his art, it is hardly less so for him.

But it will be said that children must learn to spell many more words than those whose meaning they can comprehend; or, that there are many words whose orthography they should know, which are neither used in common speech, nor can be introduced into their reading lessons. What mode, then, it may be asked, shall be adopted in reference to words which express shades of meaning too delicate, or conventional ideas too artificial, for their understanding? or in reference to words whose signification is too recondite or scientific to be comprehended by their immature faculties? It is obvious, too, that children can be taught to spell before they can write with facility; and how shall a spelling-book be prepared for this stage of instruction?



I fully admit the pertinency of these inquiries, and the justness of the suggestion they contain. And, further, I believe that, if children were properly taught, all those of average capacity and of fair opportunities would be able, at the age of eight or nine years, to spell nearly all the words to be found in modern English literature. But at this age, they cannot be expected to define or understand all the words in modern English literature. Orthography, then, in its later stages, may outrun a comprehension of the words spelled. In the earlier stages of learning the language, I would have no word presented to a child, of which he cannot have an idea, correct as far as it goes; because this is the only mode of making the study of the language a welcome exercise, and of imbuing the mind with a love of books, instead of creating an antipathy against them. Nor, in any stage of education, would I ever abandon this principle of intelligence, in regard to the reading lessons. But in consideration of the extraordinary character of our language, in regard to its orthography, I would make an exception, in the later stages of the spelling exercises, to the general rule, which forbids our presenting any words to children that they cannot understand.\* But after children have become familiar with books,

\* My views on the subject of intelligence in reading, were expressed in the first volume of the Common School Journal, which views, in order to prevent any misapprehension in regard to what is said here on the subject of spelling, I venture to repeat. They are as follows:—

On the subject of teaching words, without a knowledge of the things they signify, we have an earnest and sincere appeal to prefer, in behalf of that younger portion of our community, known by the name of "*The Spelling-Book Public*."

In Scotland, the spelling-book is called the *spell-book*, and we ought to adopt that appellation here; for, as it is often used with us, it does cast a spell over the faculties of children, which, generally, they do not break for years;—and oftentimes, we believe, never. If any two things on earth should be put together, and kept together, one would suppose that it should be the idea of a thing and the name of that thing. The spelling-book, however, is a most artful and elaborate contrivance, by which words are separated from their meanings, so that the words can be transferred into the mind of the pupil, without permitting any glimmer of the meaning to accompany them. A spelling-book is a collection of signs without the things signified;—of words without sense;—a dictionary without definitions. It is a place where words are shut up and impounded, so that their significations cannot get at them. The very notion of language is, that it is a vehicle for thought and feeling, from mind to mind. Without the thought and feeling, the vehicle goes empty. Pretending to carry freight, it carries no freight. To become familiar with things and their properties, without any knowledge of the names by which they are called, would be the part of beings who had intelligence, but no faculty of speech; but to learn names, without the things or properties signified, is surely the part of beings who have speech, but no intelligence. Who does not know that he can get ideas both of a man and his name, or of a thing and its name, together, tenfold easier than apart? When I see a person whose appearance interests me, or when I see any new work of art, or when I enter a strange town, my first inquiry is, What is the name? That is the point of time when the name becomes important to me, and, therefore, it is the point when I can acquire its pronunciation and its orthography, and so connect them together by association in my mind, that they will always reappear together, afterwards, as an identity. When names and things are only mechanically fastened, instead of being chemically combined, why should they not get jostled and jumbled, so that the right idea shall come accompanied by the wrong name, or the right name shall associate the wrong idea? or, what is more probable, shall associate no idea at all? In the first two cases, the result is error; in the last, nonsense.

In teaching children words, in the earlier stages of education, the objects they designate should, as far as possible, be presented. Where the object is familiar to the child, but is one which is not or cannot be present or in sight, then let it be referred to, so that there shall be in the mind of the child a conscious union of the name and object, as in case of the words *river*, *boat*, *moon*, &c. If the object itself cannot be exhibited, and is not familiar, so as to be referred to, then some representation or model of it should be presented. But let a preference always be given to the object itself, or to the recollection of it, when known. In the school of Pestalozzi, a series of engravings was prepared, representing a variety of objects, whose names, structure, and use, the children were to learn. One day, the master having presented to his class the engraving of a ladder, a

and have enjoyed a taste of the exquisite sweetness they contain, a less grateful part of the labor can then be assigned to them, without danger of producing ennui or disgust. Besides, after the age of eight or ten years, (if not even earlier than this,) I believe the power of acquiring the orthography of the language diminishes, while the ability to comprehend its compass and force rapidly increases. For these reasons, the early years of childhood, before the reflective faculties are developed, should be employed in perfecting the work of orthography, so that, in the maturer stages of the intellect, the undivided energies of the mind may be applied to a higher class of studies.

To elucidate the question, in what manner a spelling-book should be constructed to teach orthography merely, it is necessary to recur again, for a moment, to the structure of our language. This is so anomalous that no general rule can be devised, which correct spelling

lively little boy exclaimed, "But there is a real ladder in the court-yard; why not talk about that rather than the picture?" "The engraving is here," said the master, "and it is more convenient to talk about what is before your eyes, than to go into the yard to talk about the other." The boy's remark, thus eluded, was for that time disregarded. Soon after, the engraving of a window formed the subject of examination. "But why," exclaimed the same little objector,—“why talk of this picture of a window, when there is a real window in the room, and there is no need to go into the court-yard for it?” In the evening, both circumstances were mentioned to Pestalozzi. "The boy is right," said he; "the reality is better than the counterfeit;—put away the engravings, and let the class be instructed in real objects." This was the origin of a better mode of instruction, suggested by the wants and pleasures of an active mind. Put away the engravings, we respond, where the real objects can be had, or referred to. If it be impracticable to exhibit the real object, as it is to show a ship to an inland child, then present the picture, or, what is better, a model.

If one should wish to prepare a boy to work upon a farm, or to be a salesman in a store, would he shut him up in a closet, giving him a list of the names of all the farming utensils, and seeds, and products, or a list of all the commodities in a trader's invoice, and, when he had learned these, send him to his place of destination as one acquainted with the objects, the materials, with which he is to be occupied? If one should wish to make a boy personally acquainted with the business community of the city of Boston, would he give him a bare list of their names, unaccompanied by a single suggestion as to person, occupation, or character?—would he have a city Directory expressly prepared, which should contain no designation of residence or employment, but exhibit a mere bald catalogue of names from A to Z, and, when, after much anguish of spirit, the boy had learned to spell and to pronounce all the names, send him forth into the marts and exchanges of the city, as one acquainted with its people and ready to transact business with them? Or, would he not rather take him to the resorts of business, and, when he and the merchants or mechanics stood face to face, acquaint him with the name, occupation, &c., of each; so that name, person, employment, &c., might be mingled into one conception;—as, in making blue paper, the manufacturer stirs the color into the pulp, so that, when the paper is made, the color cannot be removed without destroying the substance? If the person or thing cannot be exhibited, the absence should be supplied, as far as possible, by some visible representation, or some description.

Again; the things, the relations, of art, of science, of business, are to the mind of a child what the nutriment of food is to his body; and the mind will be enervated, if fed on the names of things, as much as the body would be emaciated, if fed upon the names of food. Yet, formerly, it was the almost universal practice,—and we fear it is now nearly so,—to keep children two or three years in the spelling-book, where the mind's eye is averted from the objects, qualities, and relations of existing things, and fastened upon a few marks, of themselves wholly uninteresting.

Who has ever looked at a child, above the age of nine months, without witnessing his eager curiosity to gaze at and handle the objects within his reach? He loves to play with a bright shovel and tongs, to pull the dishes from the table by the corner of the cloth, to disperse the contents of a work-basket, because these are something. There is substance, color, motion in them. What an imagination it is, which turns a stick into a horse; and makes a little girl dress and undress a doll, to prepare it for going to visit or to bed! But what is there in the alphabet, or in monosyllables, to stimulate this curiosity, or to gratify it? The senseless combinations of letters into *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*, deaden this curiosity. And, after it has been pretty effectually extinguished, so that, by the further aid of the spelling-book, the child can perform the feat of speaking without thinking,—as circus horses are taught to trot without advancing,—then let him be carried into reading lessons, where there are but few words he has ever seen or heard before, and where the subject is wholly beyond the reach of his previous attainments, and if, by this process, the

will not violate many more times than it will obey. If we have rules, there must be almost as many rules as words, which belies the very definition of a rule. If our orthography, then, cannot be learned by rule, it must be learned by rote; for to learn and to remember the spelling of each word, as an individual, would be an almost interminable, if not an impossible process. It must be learned by association,—that is, by a repetition of the letters in their orthographical order, until they shall recur, as it were, spontaneously, like well-conned notes in music. For this purpose, all words having a similar formation, should be brought together, in tables, which may be learned just as the Multiplication Table is learned. When a quick accountant, in multiplying, says 9 times 9 are 81, he does not go through with the mental process by which 9 9s, added together, are perceived to make 81; but, in the mental operation, the moment the first two numbers are uttered or

very faculty of thought be not subjugated, it must be because the child is incorrigibly strong-minded. These are the most efficient means of stultification, and if they do not succeed, the experiment must be given up.

The gorges and marshy places in the Alps and Pyrenees produce a race of idiots, known, technically, by the name of *Cretins*. These beings are divided by physiologists into three classes. The cretins of the first degree are mere blank idiots. But the cretins of the third degree have great facility in acquiring languages. They can be taught so as to translate the words of one language into those of another, though without the slightest comprehension of the meaning of either; and, what is more remarkable, they will, so far as the rhyme is concerned, make good poetry. If words are taught to children for years, during the most active part of their life, without any of the ideas they are intended to convey, ought we to be surprised, if much of our public speaking and popular literature should be the production of cretins of the third degree?

First and chiefest, in reading, let the lesson be understood;—its words, its phrases, its connections; its object, if it have any object; if not, it is not proper for a reading lesson. Every word and sentence to which no meaning is attached, is an enemy, lying in ambush. Keep the videttes of the mind out, to discover that enemy. If the name *Socrates* or *Rome* occur, see that the pupil knows who Socrates, what Rome, was; and that he does not suppose the former to be a city, and the latter a man. In reading the chapters giving an account of St. Paul's shipwreck, let every place which is named be exhibited upon the map. In reading the account of the discovery of America, by Columbus, see that the mind of every child goes back to "Friday, the third day of August, in the year one thousand four hundred and ninety-two, and starts with the great discoverer from Palos, in Spain, a little before sunrise, in presence of a vast crowd of spectators." Let them accompany the three ships as they proceed out of port and sail directly to the Canary Islands; show them where the Canaries are; see that they comprehend the thrilling incidents of the voyage; that they sympathize with the noble commander; that they get a notion of the length of time which was occupied in sailing through a distance which could now be passed over in a steamboat in twelve days. Make them perceive the perils and the dejection of the crew, the shout of *Land!* from the mast-head, and the Thanksgiving for its discovery. The whole scene of debarkation;—the manning, arming, and rowing of the boats; the flying of the colors; the warlike music; the multitude of wondering savages upon the shore, gazing, with all the gestures of astonishment, as the boats approach the land; the landing of Columbus, grasping in his hand a naked sword, (which has not yet ceased to be the terrible emblem of the Indian's fate;) his men kneeling down and kissing the ground, which they had despaired of ever beholding again;—all this can be presented to the minds of the children just as vividly as though it had been witnessed by themselves, like the last militia training. Let this be once understandingly read, and the children will no more forget it, than a country miss will forget the first time she went to Boston, to spend a pocket-full of money. Yet we have known the first class in a school read this animating description without any more knowledge of what was in the book, than the book had of what was in them. When the celebrated phrenologist, Mr. George Combe, came from Edinburgh to this country, in order to deliver lectures in all the principal cities of the United States, the Edinburgh Phrenological Society loaned him a variety of skulls of people of different nations and characters, to illustrate the different conformations of human heads. These skulls have crossed the Atlantic; they are now travelling from city to city, through this country; and when they have visited the principal places, they will take passage to Edinburgh, and be deposited again upon the shelves of the Phrenological Society. How many of the children, in our schools, are travelling over the varied beauties of the lessons in their reading-books, and will know as little, at the end of the season, where they have been, as Mr. Combe's collection of travelling skulls will know of the United States, when they get back to Edinburgh!



thought of, the third follows without any consciousness of intermediate steps. It is not probable that there are any intermediate steps. It is like the burden of an accustomed song, which we troll without volition or aim. It is in the same way that we repeat the Pence Tables and all the Tables of Weights and Measures. We do not go through with the intermediate steps, but, having formerly been drilled upon them long, the result rises instantaneously in the mind, on a perception of the antecedent terms, by the law of association. It is said that there are officers in the banking-houses of Great Britain, who have become so familiar with the amount of interest on notes, for different sums and times, that, the sum and time being given, the amount of the interest rises in the mind at once and without computation. Sum, time, and interest, are combined in one perception,—a fact of Individuality.

Dr. Biber, a writer of some vigor on the subject of education, maintains that, in working out the longest processes in multiplication, the mind should *think through* all the successive steps, in regular order, and not pass from the two antecedent terms to the product, at a bound. I can see no advantage in this; and, at the quickest speed of the mind, it certainly involves some delay. The more the process is abbreviated, the better, provided we are sure of a correct result. Something of this shortening process takes place with all ready readers. Educated men do not summon into the mind all the particular ideas signified by the words and phrases used, as has been fully explained by Locke, Burke, and others. The practised mind springs to the conclusion without touching every intermediate point of space in the path that leads to it; but this supposes a rapidity of movement, a power of gathering up results at a sweep, which beginners never possess. This, however, may be said in regard to Dr. Biber's mode of working arithmetical processes, that, if we should examine every element, individually, in order to reach our conclusion, that conclusion would be infallibly correct. If, for instance, I would not admit that 12 times 12 are 144, until I had mentally brought twelve times twelve units into one sum,—it is infinitely certain that, on going through such a process accurately, I should arrive at the customary result. Hence, although it is highly desirable to be able to repeat the tables of rudimental arithmetic by association, or the mere force of memory, yet this is by no means necessary; for if we apply the severest logic to the facts, the conclusion will always follow legitimately from the premises. But in regard to the orthography of our language, this will never be found true. The faculty of judgment, the power by which we trace relations between causes and effects, and by which we expect the same results from the same antecedents, will be perpetually baffled if we attempt to spell words according to the vocal power, or *name sound*, as it is sometimes called, of the letters as presented in the alphabet; or, if we infer that one word should be spelled so or so, because another is spelled so or so. And, in reference to this point, I would lay down a general principle, which I think of great importance, viz., that the faculties by which we reason ought never to be employed on any subject, when the logical results to which sound reasoning would arrive, are not the true results. If the thing to be done or learned is arbitrary, let it be done by force of authority, of imitation, of mere association of ideas; but do not maltreat the powers of reasoning, by calling



in their aid, when their responses will be repudiated as soon as uttered. There is no reason why the last syllable in the word *vexatious*, should be spelled *t i o u s*, and the last syllable in *fallacious*, *c i o u s*, and the last in *herbaceous*, *c e o u s*. There is no reason why the last syllable in *impatient*, should be *t i e n t*, and the last in *deficient*, *c i e n t*;—and so through the whole English vocabulary. And if reason cannot be applied to the subject, let us avail ourselves of the extraordinary power which the mind possesses, of connecting arbitrary ideas or signs indissolubly together, by the law of association. To make this more clear, let us suppose that the Multiplication Table, instead of being infallibly true, as it now is, were thrown into a state of derangement and confusion, equal to that which prevails in the formation of our words; and, further, that the law of the land should sanction and establish its arithmetical absurdities as the rules to be observed in all business transactions, just as the law of custom or reputable use sanctions and establishes all the anomalies of our orthography;—for instance, let us suppose that, by the mercantile law, 6 times 1 should be equal to 5; 6 times 2, to 10; 6 times 3, to 15; 6 times 4, to 20; 6 times 5, to 25; 6 times 6, to 30; and that, after 6 times 6, the gauge should be changed, so that 7 times 6 should be 43; 8 times 6, 50; 9 times 6, 57; 10 times 6, 64; 11 times 6, 71, and 12 times 6, 78; and that this obliquity should pervade the whole table, with here and there only an analogy in the errors. And here it should be observed, that these supposed arithmetical impossibilities are not half so great a departure from scientific truth as our orthography is from the original power of the letters, as children are taught to pronounce them in the alphabet. But suppose such a table, by some fortuity or fatuity, to be erected into a legal standard; would any mortal put a reasoning and thinking being to study it, by an application of the faculties with which he discerns the immutable and indestructible relations of numbers? Would any mortal think it expedient or useful to put a child into the Numeration Table, to keep him for months counting units, from one onward to a hundred, and from a hundred backward to one, and adding them together, as a preparation for learning with ease, pleasure, and despatch, that 6 times 1 are 5; 6 times 2, 10, &c. &c.? Yet this, in principle, is precisely like the preparatory training on the alphabet which we give to children in our schools, to fit them for using that beautiful and wonderful instrument,—a written language,—with eloquence and power.

The conclusions, to which the above considerations seem to lead, are the three following:—

1st. That spelling-books should not be discarded altogether.

If children should be introduced to a knowledge of written language, by means of the most attractive and impressive objects and ideas of objects, then those nouns which are the names of the most striking and agreeable things, the adjectives, descriptive of the most brilliant and pleasing qualities, and the verbs, expressive of agile and graceful motions, should be presented to them, at first without the encumbrances of articles, prepositions, and conjunctions. There are many single words which present an entire picture; while for other pictures we must use sentences. This is one of the differences between a spelling and a reading book, and the simplest should come first.

Another argument in favor of using a spelling-book is, that it pro-

motes correctness in syllabication ; \* and correct syllabication favors both good pronunciation and enunciation. †

2d. The first books, or cards, from which reading should be taught to children, should contain whole words, with the meaning of which the learners are entirely familiar. I believe the earliest books, in this country, on this plan, were prepared by Worcester and Gallaudet. They contained pictures of persons and objects, each picture being accompanied by its printed name ; and the names were afterwards repeated without the pictures.

As the picture presented to the child a more agreeable object than the word, it was thought, by some teachers, to be an impediment to progress ; and children were said to get the idea that the word was the peculiar name of that one picture, and to feel as though it were a kind of contradiction to apply it to any thing else. Within the last year or two, books have been prepared by Mr. J. F. Bumstead, of Boston, on the same general plan in regard to the words, but omitting the pictures altogether. Mr. Bumstead's books are now used in all the primary schools in Boston. The plan of teaching words first has succeeded, wherever it has been fairly tried ; and I have no doubt that it will soon wholly supersede the old and doleful method of beginning with the alphabet. ‡

In regard to the contents of these *First Books*, it may not be amiss to suggest, that they should contain words which are familiar, which excite vivid and delightful images or emotions, which are tasteful, as contradistinguished from gross or vulgar terms, and which will be apt to bring kindly, social, and generous feelings in their train. The words *kill, blood, gun, angling-rod, sword, &c.*, may be very pleasant to the destructive propensities of a child, but for that very reason I would not have them in his book. There are innocent words or em-

\* "For want of a knowledge what letters of a word belong to one syllable, and what to another, many persons divide their words, in writing successive lines, where there is no division. No rule should be more familiar than this, that if there be not space enough for the whole written or printed word in one line, but a part of it is to be inserted in the next, the word should be divided between syllables, and not elsewhere. But one who has paid no attention to syllabication in spelling, will be very likely to violate this rule. In writing the word *plushy*, for instance, he would put *pla* in the first line, and *shy* in the second. Or the word *singing* he might divide by placing *sin* in the first line, and *ging* in the second ; by which the hearer would get *singe-ing*, instead of *sing-ing*. Indeed, if this division of words into their proper syllables is to be learned by itself, it will be found an enormous labor ; but if learned while spelling, it will hardly add any thing to the task."—*Common School Journal*, Vol. I., p. 354.

† "Mispronunciations often consist in attaching a letter to one syllable which belongs to another. Take the words *de-stroy* or *de-spair*,—it makes an entire difference in the pronunciation, whether the letter *s* be sounded as belonging to the first syllable or to the second. To spell the words by syllables, instead of spelling them by letters, tends to fix the true line between the syllables, in pronunciation. It tends, also, to give clearness and distinctness to the articulation of the voice, so that each syllable may come out by itself, in speaking, like a well-struck note in music. Without this individuality of the syllables, speakers always fail in emphasis and cadence. Syllables are to be regarded as links in a chain, and not as parts of a continuous rod. Without this distinct enunciation of the syllables, the articulation seems glutinous and gummy ;—the words *rope out*, instead of each syllable's falling with a *tinkle* of its own. But let no one, as he reads, in avoiding this gluey enunciation, run into the opposite extreme, and make long bars, or vacant spaces, between his syllables,—pausing as though a hyphen were a period," &c.—*Common School Journal*, Vol. I., p. 354.

‡ Since this Lecture was delivered, a beautiful book, entitled "*PRIMER*," by Mary T. Peabody, has been published in Boston. It is prepared on the same general principles with those of Worcester, Gallaudet, and Bumstead ; and it contains two or three reading lessons, and a few cuts for drawing, in addition to a most attractive selection of words. It is the result of many years' successful efforts in interesting young children in reading and spelling.

blems enough to excite the interest of children, without drawing upon that class which is more proper to wolves and warriors; or to those who find a pastime in the sufferings of animals, which God has created to be used, but not to be tortured by us. I would as soon give a tender-hearted child Guido's picture of "The Murder of the Innocents," as I would a description of a hare-hunt or deer-hunt, by noblemen and bishops.

Provide books on this plan, and learning to read will cease to be a burden and a mockery. The teacher, in good faith, may invite a group of little children to come around her *to think of pleasant things*, instead of forcing them to gaze at idiot marks. Such lessons will be like an excursion to the fields of elysium, compared with the old method of plunging children, day after day, for months together, in the cold waters of oblivion, and compelling them to say, falsely, that they love the chill and torpor of the immersion. After children have learned to read words, the twenty-six letters, as they stand marshalled in the alphabet, will be learned in a few hours.

3d. When reading has become easy, and it is expedient to carry forward the orthography of the language faster than it is possible to comprehend the meaning of all its words, a spelling-book, constructed according to the law of association, should be put into the hands of the pupil. Although this idea had been acted upon to some extent before, yet the only spelling-book with which I am acquainted, that carries it out fully, is one prepared by William B. Fowle, Esq., of Boston. A few specimens from the book will give an intelligible view of its plan. Table 1st consists of the words *ace, lace, mace, pace, space*, &c.; table 15th has *boil, coil, foil, spoil, broil, soil*, &c.; table 27th, *bleed, seed, creed, speed, steed*, &c.; table 28th has *each, bleach, peach, reach*, &c.; and table 29th, *chief, thief, brief, grief*, &c. The numerous words ending in *ence*, in *ance*, and *ense*, are brought together in their appropriate places. Words in which *igh* has the long sound of *i*, as *highland, highly, lighted, slighted*, &c., are found in the same table. Words ending in *tion, sion, cion*, are respectively arranged in separate tables, while *ocean*, which deviates from all the rest, stands by itself. So of the words ending in *tious, cious, ceous*; in *tial*, and *cial*; in *tient*, and *cient*; in *ion* and *eon*;—words also in which *h*, and *k*, and *g*, and *p*, and *u*, and *ue*, and *w*, respectively, are silent. But this will suffice for a description of the book.\*

This mode of classification has the high authority of the Rev. T. H. Gallaudet in its favor, as may be seen by a reference to the preface of "The Practical Spelling-Book;" but Mr. Fowle's work applies the principle far more extensively than any other I have ever seen.

Now, it would seem to need no argument to prove that a child will master twenty pages of words arranged in this way, easier than he will a single page of words classed according to the number of syllables and the place of the accent, irrespective of their formation;—where *a* and *eigh*, *e* and *eo*, *i* and *igh*, *o* and *eau*, *u* and *ew*, with countless other combinations, have, respectively, the same sound, and are jumbled together after the similitude of chaos.

On such lessons as these, scholars will very rarely spell wrong. They can go through the book twenty times while they would go

\* D. H. Williams, publisher, Water Street, Boston.



through a common spelling-book once; and each time will rivet the association, that is, it will make an ally of the almost unconquerable force of habit. A connection will be established between the general idea of the word and its component letters which it will be nearly impossible to dissolve. In pursuing any study or art, it is of the greatest importance to have the first movements, whether of the eye, the hand, or the tongue, right. The end will be soonest obtained by submitting to any delay that exactness may require. We all know with what tenacity first impressions retain their hold upon the mind. When in a strange place, if we mistake the points of the compass, it is almost impossible to rectify the error; and it becomes a contest which of the two parties will hold out longest, the natural points of the compass in their position, or we in our false impression. So if, in geography, we get an idea that a city is on the west bank of a river, when it is on the east, it is almost as practicable to transfer the city itself, bodily, to the side of the river where it seems to belong, as it is to unclinch our own impressions, and make them conform to its true location. These illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely. What is it that gives a specific character to each individual's hand-writing, rendering it so difficult to make a passable counterfeit;—nay, rendering it so difficult for a man to disguise his own autograph? It is the force of habit, which, unconsciously to ourselves, has connected certain motions of the muscles of the arm and hand with volitions of the mind. And the volitions of the mind and the motions of the lips, or the hand, may be habituated to observe a certain order in regard to the successive letters to be used in spelling, as well as in regard to the shape of those letters, as we write them. The law of habit, which is so efficient in the one case, is not repealed in the other. The whole difference consists in our bringing ourselves within its action in the one case, but not in the other. As the organs of speech learn an almost infinite variety of sounds, which they utter without change or mistake,—sounds which were first uttered from imitation, but which have become fixed by the power of habit,—so may the tongue in spelling words, and the hand in writing them, establish, by the power of frequent association, that peculiar sequence of letters which spells each word,—so that the letters will take their places as spontaneously in writing as we know the sounds do in speaking.

After the book has been spelled through many times, it will be well, as a testing or experimental exercise, to put out words from the different tables promiscuously, in order to determine whether or not it may be necessary to drill the pupils longer upon it.

I have not spoken particularly, in this Lecture, of writing words on the slate or black-board, or of spelling them from the reading lesson, as those topics do not come strictly within my present subject, and as I have treated of them in various places in the Common School Journal.

I make no apology for dwelling so long upon so dry and uninteresting a theme, believing that he who removes an obstacle, or plucks a thorn, from the path of the child, in his way to knowledge, is a public benefactor,—and that my efforts to do this will be charitably received, even though they should be but partially successful.